

PROFESSOR OLAOFE OLURIN AND PROFESSOR OLAJIDE AJAYI: TWO MEN WHO DARED TO DREAM

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The Association of Resident Doctors, University College Hospital, Ibadan has a very rich history. 2023AD marks the 55th year of the founding of the association.¹ Today, the association has evolved into more than seventy-three of its type and it was the springboard of the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors.¹ Unfortunately, very little is known about the founding and the roles of Professor Emmanuel Olaofe Olurin and Olajide Ajayi in the evolution of the association.

The founding of the association was fortuitous rather than intentional.¹⁻³ The University College Hospital had specifically been designed for the training of undergraduate medical student of the University of London in the anglophone countries of West Africa.⁴ With the effort of great medical scholars and the prominent role of Professor Victor Anomah Ngu, the Association of Surgeons of West Africa (ASWA) was birthed in December 1960.^{1,5} The question of postgraduate training of doctors gained increasing importance due to subcontinental pro-independence consciousness, culminating in the formation of the West African College of Surgeons in 1969, and a merger of the association and the college in January 1973.^{5,6}



Prof. Olajide O. Ajayi

Early on and unknown to the founding fathers themselves, a quantum leap was underway. In 1967, Dr. Emmanuel Olaofe Olurin and Dr Olajide Ajayi were already appointed as Senior Registrar and registrar, although they had the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) of England in 1964 and 1967, respectively.² Motivated by Professor Ngu's prominent roles in the custom-built postgraduate medical education in West Africa, Mr. Olurin (FRCS) and Mr. Ajayi (FRCS) began intramural teaching arrangement for cadres of doctors in preparation for basic postgraduate examination abroad in 1967.^{2,7}

When Mr. Olurin (FRCS) got appointed as Lecturer by the University of Ibadan and substantive consultant to the hospital, the baton of mentorship and intramural coaching was handed to Mr. Ajayi (FRCS). This teaching group evolved by nomenclature to the Association of Resident Doctors after ASWA to provide intramural teaching as a preparatory for overseas examinations. This was formalized with election of officers in 1968.¹

My admiration of these notable frontiers continues to soar. Unfortunately, their roles in the founding of the



Prof. Emmanuel Olaofe Olurin

association is missing in most referenced texts in the scientific community. It is instructive to document this information in the literature in an attempt to reawaken the consciousness of the members of the association to its founding philosophy and highlight this important historical information about the association.

In the association's roll of honor, E.O. Olurin and O.O. Ajayi are listed as Presidents in 1967 and 1968, respectively. However, it must be noted that Olaofe Olurin is historically the founder (Honoris Causa) while Olajide Ajayi is the first President of the Association.^{2,3,7} Professor Ajayi held this position till August 1969 when he joined the service of University of Ibadan, as a lecturer and substantive consultant, and handed over the leadership to Dr. (now Professor Emeritus) Ebenezer Oluwole Akande.⁸

I am inspired by the lives and times of Professor Olaofe Olurin and Professor Olajide Ajayi and I believe their lives will be a beacon of hope for doctors that pass through the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Nigeria. They came, and left behind a great legacy.

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